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SOSPIRI DI ROMA

WILLIAM SHARP

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1897.



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BY

WILLIAM SHARP

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR

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1891

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TO
ALFRED AUSTIN

You who have loved Italy so long, and sung of her so often, may care for these Breaths of Rome — the wider, not merely the urban Rome — if not for themselves, at least because of our friendship, and above all for the happy memories they may be fortunate enough to recall to you.

W. S.

ROME, Summer, 1883: 1890-91.

PRELUDE

(TO _____)

"Supra un munti sperman stu bellu ciuri!
Chistu è lu ciuri di la rò billizza "

(*Sicilian Canzuno*).

IN a grove of ilex
Of oak and of chestnut,
Far on the sunswept
Heights of Tusculum,
There groweth a blossom,
A snow-white bloom,
Which many have heard of,
But few have seen.
Oft bright as the morning,
Oft pale as moonlight,
There in the greenness,
In shadow and sunshine
It grows, awaiting
The hand that shall pluck it:
For this blossom springeth
From the heart of a poet
And of her who loved him

In the long ago,
Here on the sunswept
Heights of Tusculum.
And them it awaiteth,
Deep lovers only,
Kindred of those
Who loved and passionate
There, and whose hearts-blood
Wrought from the Earth
This marvellous blossom,
The Shadow-Lily,
The Flower of Dream.

Few that shall see it,
Fewer still
Those that shall pluck it:
But whoso gathers
That snow-white blossom
Shall love for ever,
For the passionate breath
Of the Shadow-Lily
Is Deathless Joy:
And whoso plucks it, keeps it, treasures it,
Has sunshine ever
About the heart,
Deep in the heart immortal sunshine:
For this is the gift of the snow-white blossom,
This is the gift of the Flower of Dream.

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Sospiri di Roma

SUSURRO.

BREATH o' the grass,
Ripple of wandering wind,
Murmur of tremulous leaves:
A moonbeam moving white
Like a ghost across the plain:
A shadow on the road:
And high up, high,
From the cypress-bough,
A long sweet melancholy note.
Silence.

And the topmost spray
Of the cypress-bough is still
As a wavelet in a pool:
The road lies duskily bare:
The plain is a misty gloom:
Still are the tremulous leaves;
Scarce a last ripple of wind,
Scarce a breath i' the grass.
Hush: the tired wind sleeps:
Is it the wind's breath, or
Breath o' the grass.

HIGH NOON AT MIDSUMMER
ON THE CAMPAGNA.

HIGH noon,
And from the purple-veiled hills
To where Rome lies in azure mist,
Scarce any breath of wind
Upon this vast and solitary waste,
These leagues of sunscorch'd grass
Where i' the dawn the scrambling goats maintain
A hardy feast,
And where, when the warm yellow moonlight floods the flats,
Gaunt laggard sheep browse spectrally for hours
While not less gaunt and spectral shepherds stand
Brooding, or with hollow vacant eyes
Stare down the long perspectives of the dusk.
Now not a breath:
No sound;
No living thing,
Save where the beetle jars his crackling shards,
Or where the hoarse cicada fills
The heavy heated hour with palpitant whirr.
Yet hark!
Comes not a low deep whisper from the ground,
A sigh as though the immemorial past

Breathed here a long, slow, breath?
Lost nations sleep below; an empire here
Is dust; and deeper, deeper still,
Dim shadowy peoples are the mould that warms
The roots of every flower that blooms and blows:
Even as we, too, bloom and fade,
Frail human flowers, who are so bitter fain
To be as the wind that bloweth evermore,
To be as this dread waste that shroudeth all
In garments green of grass and wilding sprays,
To be as the Night that dies not, but forever
Weaves her immortal web of starry fires;
To be as Time itself,
Time, whose vast holocausts
Lie here, deep buried from the ken of men,
Here, where no breath of wind
Ruffles the brooding heat,
The breathless blazing heat
Of Noon.

FIOR DI MEMORIA.

"..... ed ogni vento
Che passa accoglie sulle tepidi ali
I sospiri d'amor di mille rose".

ENRICO NENCIONI.

FROM the swamp the white mist stealeth,
Wendeth slowly through the grasses,
Like a long lithe snake it circleth
Breathing from its mouth its poison,
Breathing fumes of the malaria.
Up the grassy slope it passeth,
Is a snake no more but changes
To a thin white veil of smoke-drift,
White as when the warm Scirocco
Blows across wet meadows gleaming
In the sudden glare of sunshine.
Thin and white upon the uplands;
Dappled, soft, as windblown swans-down,
In the sudden dips and hollows.

In the hollow where the ruins,
Immemorial ruins, columns,
Prostrate all, with strange devices,
Sculptured 'neath the yellow lichen,

In the hollow where the ruins-
Lie as when the earthquake shook them
From their ancient stately beauty
Long ere Rome had gathered slowly
Round the sacred fane of Saturn,
There the grass is tall as wild-rice,
Tall as is the wind-waved bulrush
Rustling by the Tiber-marshes.
Nought is seen around but grasses,
Flower-filled grasses, lizard-haunted,
Musical with many whisperings
And the loud crescendo humming
Of the wild-bees coming, going,
And the myriad things that flitter,
Breathe, and gleam, and swift vanish
Mid these tortuous dim savannahs,
These gigantic grass-stem forests.
Nought above, but the blue hollow
With its infinite depths of azure.
Nought to meet the wandering vision
But the ruins mid the grasses,
But the windied grasses swaying
Up and billowing o'er the margins
Of the lone mist-haunted hollow,
But the wide deep dome of purple,
Cloudless, speckless, save when darkling
For a moment drifts a shadow
Far in the aerial distance,
Though no sound is borne earthward

Of the scream of that wild eagle
Whirling from his Volscian eyrie.

Where the green gloom of the grasses
Turns at noon to amber dayshine,
There the fallen ruins are covered
With a wilderness of roses:
Roses, roses, in such masses
That the fangless snakes which wander
Deep within their fragrant coverts
Sink and rise and glide and vanish
As though swimming in sweet waters
Where each wavelet curdles rosily
To a blossoming bud or floateth
Calmly as a smooth soft rose-leaf.
Oh, the wilderness of roses
Shrouding all the fallen columns,
All the mossy lichen'd marbles:
Crimson depths of fluctuant sweetness,
Carmine, pink, some wanly yellow
As young lime-leaves in the dawnlight,
Some as ivory of India
Defly wrought by patient fingers
In the dim mysterious ages;
Others wan as surf in starlight,
Dusky white as coral garnered
In the deeps where light a dream is,
Ruffling the swart glooms of Ocean:
But damask most, or crimson, blood-red,

Flushed as wine-stained, or as dawn-clouds.
Mass on mass of tangled roses,
Blossom-flames, or multitudinous
Plumes of those lost birds of Eden
Which, as in long roseate vapours,
With a myriad wings waft upward
Each new morn, and with the sunrise
Earthward sweep on glowing pinions,
Till they wheel and fade and vanish
On their endless quest of Eden.
One vast crimson flood of roses,
Whence a carven stone or column
Reareth sometimes as a boulder
Swart upborne o'er sunset-waters.
Oh the fragrance when the south-wind,
When the languorous Scirocco
Breathes with tepid breath upon them,
And with idle feet strays lightly
O'er and o'er their billowy sweetness.
Nought but this flushed sea of roses,
And the green gloom of the grasses
Shrouding the forgotten ruins
In the lone mist-haunted hollow,
Lost, unseen, but domed in splendour
By the depths of purple azure.

Lo, amidst the roses' tangle
What white sunlit beauty shineth?
Some stone goddess, nymph, or naiad,

Carven in the bygone ages,
Wan as ivory now, and glowing
With the multitudinous breaths of sunlight?
Nay, no marble this that gleameth
Ivory-white among the roses,
For the naked flesh moves gently
With the breath that rising, falling,
Scarcely stirs the fluttered rose-leaves.
O wild mountain-girl, whom never
Lover yet has won with passion,
But whose arms have claspt the hill-wind,
But whose swelling breast has quivered
'Neath the soft south-wind's caresses,
Whose white limbs have felt the kisses
Of the wandering wind, thy lover:
O wild mountain-girl, sleep ever,
Naked there in all thy beauty
Mid the sea of clustering roses,
Lost within the green-glooms tender
Of the wind-swayed desert-grasses.
Dark thy cloud of hair about thee,
Dark thy shadowy eyes that dream
Far into the azure distance:
White thy limbs as sunlit ivory,
With stray roseleaves scattered o'er them,
With thy sea of roses round thee.
What strange dreams are thine, O Goddess —
Goddess, surely, for beyond thee
Sways a cloud of fluttering sparrows:

Ah, is it thou — nay, never goddess
Now to mortal man discloseth
That serene immortal beauty,
Which is as a draught of rapture
Fraught with bitterness and sorrow:
I have tasted, quaffed it, Goddess,
For the soul can know and see thee,
For the soul can woo and win thee,
Thee, even thee, O Beautiful!
I have drunk its perilous rapture,
Knowing all have quaffed and feared not,
And have known the bitter savour:
Yet, would drink again, O Goddess!

Nay, no goddess here, but only,
Naked, dreaming in the sunshine,
Ivory-white among the rose-leaves,
With her dark hair thrown about her
Like the dusk about the morning,
Only a wild mountain-girl,
Filled with secret springs of passion,
Immemorial seeds of passion
Wrought at last through generations
In this perfect flower of beauty
To a strange unspeakable longing.
In a blaze of heat the sunlight,
Fierce with torrid fires of Junetide,
Beats upon her white limbs gleaming
In the sunlit flames of roses:

But she moves not, though a quiver
Ofttimes passes like a tremor
Shimmering through the furthest eastward
Ere the stars grow suddenly paler.

O wild mountain-girl, sleep ever,
Naked there in all thy beauty
Mid the sea of clustering roses:
Deep within thy sea of roses
Sink to slumber, sweeter, deeper,
Where no waking is, but dreams are
Changed to roses that shall hide thee,
That shall hide thee and enshroud thee
There within thy grassy hollow:
Where the winds alone shall call thee,
And the marish-mist shall wander
Like a ghost between the grasses,
In among the buried columns
Lost within thy ruin of roses.

THE FOUNTAIN OF THE ACQUA PAOLA:

NOT where thy turbid wave
Flowing Maremma-ward,
Moves heavily, Tiber,
Through Rome the Eternal,
Not there her music, not there her joy is:
But rather where the tall pines
On the Janiculum heights
Sing their high song, with deeper therein, like an echo
Heard in a mountain-hollow where cataracts break,
A sound as of surge and of foaming:
Yes, there where the echoing pines
Whisper to high wandering winds
The rush and the surge and the splendour
Where the Acqua Paola thunders
Into its fount gigantic,
With noise like a tempest cleaving
With mighty wings
The norland forests.

From dayspring, yellow and green
And gray as a swan's breastfeather,
To sunset's amber and gold

And the white star of dusk,
And through the moonwhite hours
Till only Hesperus hangs
His quivering tremulous disc
O'er the faint-flushed forehead of Dawn —
All hours, all days, forever
Surgeth the singing flood,
With chant and paeon glorious,
With foam and splash and splendour,
A music wild, barbaric,
That calleth loud over Rome,
Laughing, mocking, rejoicing:
The sound of the waves when Ocean
Laughs at the vanishing land
And, fronting her shoreless leagues,
Remembers the ruined empires
That now are the drift and shingle
In cavernous hollows under
Her zone of Oblivion,
Silence that nought shall break,
Eternal calm.

Foam, spray and splendour
Of rushing waters,
Gray-blue as the pale blue dome
That circlet the morning star
While still his fires are brighter
Than the wanwhite fire of the moon.
Foam, spray, and surge

Of rushing waters!
O the hot flood of sunshine
Yellowly pouring
Over and into thee, jubilant Fountain:
Thy cataracts filled
With vanishing rainbows,
Shimmering lights
As though the Aurora's
Wild polar fires
Flashed in thy happy bubbles, died in thy foam.

Ever in joyous laughter
Thy wavelets are dancing,
Little waves with crests bright with sunlight
Tossing their foamy arms,
Laughing and leaping,
Whirling, inweaving,
Rippling at last and sleepily laving
The mossed stone-barriers
That clasp them round.
Bright too and joyous,
They, in the moonshine,
When the falling waters
Are as wreaths of snow
Falling for ever
Down mountain-flanks,
Like melting snows
In the high hill-hollows
Seen from the valleys

And seeming to fall,
To fall forever
A flower of water,
Silent, and stirred not
By any wind.

Bright too and joyous
In darkling nights,
When the moon shroudeth
Her face in a veil
Of cloudy vapours,
Or, like a flower
I' the wane of its beauty,
Droopeth and falleth
Till lost to sight,
Stoopeth and fadeth
Into the dark —
Or when like a sickle
Thin and silvern
She moveth slowly
Through the starry fields,
Moveth slowly
Mid the flowers of the stars
In the harvest-fields
Of Eternity:
Bright too and joyous,
For then the shadows
Play with the foam-lights,
With the flying whiteness,

And snowy surging.
But brighter, more joyous,
Save when the moon-flower
In all her splendour
Floats on thy bosom,
Or, rather, dreameth
Deep in the heart of thee
O happy Fountain:
Brighter, more joyous,
Thee, when amidst thee,
Strewn through thy waters,
The stars are sown
As seed multitudinous,
As silvern seed
In thy shadowy-furrows:
Seed of the skiey flowers
That in the heavens
Bloom forever,
Blossoms and blooms of
Eternal splendour.
Then is thy joy most,
O jubilant Fountain,
Then are thy waters
Sweetest of song,
Then do thy waters
Surge, leap, rejoicing,
Lave, and lapse slowly
To haunted stillness
And darkling dreams:

Then is thy music rarest,
Wildest and sweetest
Music of Rome —
Rome the Eternal,
Through whose heart of shadow
Moveth slowly
Flowing Maremma-ward
Thy murmur, Tiber,
Thy muffled voice,
Whom none interpreteth
But boding, ominous,
Is as the sound of
Murmurous seas
Heard afar inland —
There, where Maremma-ward
Flowing heavily,
Moveth, Tiber,
Thy turbid wave.

PRIMO SOSPIRO DI PRIMAVERA.

(Noon: First of February: On the Corsini Terraces on the Janiculum).

BOOM!
The gun has thundered forth the hour of Noon!
High upon the wings of Tramontana
Swells a storm of bells,
From a thousand churches, convents, buildings,
Clanging, jangling, intermingling,
Softened to a joyous music
Borne upward by the wind
To the heights already sounding
With the surge of the three fountains
Of the Acqua Paola torrent,
To the heights already echoing
With the Tramontana's challenge
Tossed with reckless glee and laughter
Through the ilexes and stone-pines.
What a sound as of the ocean
When the tides are driving inland,
And the rampant waves are leaping
Swift before the scourging sea-wind!

And through all the windy tumult
How the bells go wildly echoing,
Like a storm of voices calling
Far o'er mist-belcaguered waters.
Suddenly silence: even the wind swings
For a brief space skyward, chasing
The last flying ragged cloudlets:
Then from out the ilex-avenue
Rings with palpitant, thrilling rapture,
Clear and sweet, the first spring-music
Of the speckle-breasted storm-thrush!
Swish-sh-sh! the wind again, the medley
Of its strong wings beating wildly,
Spray-wet, filled with piny odours.

Silence where the herald-thrush first
Took the break of Spring with rapture.
Yet what song in all the springtide
Shall be sweeter, rarer, wilder,
Than the sudden burst of music,
Sung from utter joy and wonder
Ere the earliest limes have budded:
Than that momentary outburst
When the bells of noon had fallen
To an ebbing tide of music
Down the sounding shores of Roma,
And the turbulent Tramontana
Had far skyward swept, with pinions
Hawk-like spread to swoop upon the

Flying drifts of ragged cloudlets!
O the bells of Rome, the clamour
Of the joyous Tramontana,
O the wildness of thy music,
Rapturous thrush, last Spring remembering,
With thy lost voice freed one moment
From its long forlorn silence!
Spring is here — and Rome — together!

CLOUDS.

(*Agro Romano*)

AS THOUGH the dead cities
Of the ancient time
Were builded again
In the heights of heaven,
With spires of amber
And golden domes,
Wide streets of topaz and amethyst ways;
Far o'er the pale blue waste,
Oft purple-shadowed,
Of the Agro Romano,
Rises the splendid
City of Cloud.
There must the winds be soft as the twilight
Invisibly falling when the daystar has wester'd;
There must the rainbows trail up through the sunlight,
So fair are the hues on those white snowy masses.
Mountainous glories,
They move superbly;
Crumbling so slowly,
That none perceives when

The golden domes
Are sunk in the valleys
Of fathomless snow,
Or when, in silence,
The loftiest spires
Fade into smoke, or as vapour that passeth
When the hot breath of noon
Thirsts through the firmament.
Beautiful, beautiful,
The City of Cloud,
In splendour ruinous,
With golden domes,
And spires of amber,
Builted superbly
In the heights of heaven.

A DREAM AT ARDEA.

(*Maremma*)

WHERE Ardea, the cliff-girt,
Looks to the Sea,
Dreaming forever
In her desert place
Of her vanished glory —
There too in the tall grass,
Starred with narcissus
And the flaming poppy,
I dreamed a dream.

Not of the days when
The fierce trumpeting
Of the Asian elephants
Made the wild horses
Snort in new terror,
Snort and wheel wildly,
Till o'er the Campagna
They passed like a trail
Of vanishing smoke.
No, nor when

The brazen clarions
Of the Roman legion
Summoned the hill-folk
To the Punic War:
Nor yet when the shadow
Of the falling star
Of the House of Tarquin
Swept unseen o'er the banquet,
And none, foreseeing,
Drew forth the pure sword
For the foul heart of Sextus.
Nor yet of the ancient days
When the fierce Rutuli
Laughed at the boasting of
The seven-hilled city,
And when on rude altars
White victims lay,
To appease the anger
Of barbarian Gods —
Nay, not of these, not even the far-off,
The ancient time, when the mother of Perseus,
Danaë the beautiful, came hither and builded
Close to the sea the hill-town which standeth
Now amid leagues of the inland grasses,
White with the surf of the blossoming asphodels —
Nay, but only
Of the shrine of her,
Venus, the Beautiful One,
The Well-Beloved.

Lost, it lieth
Deep mid the tangle,
Deep 'neath the roots of the flowers and the grasses.
Drawn like a veil o'er
The face of Maremma.
Only the brown lark
Singing above it,
Only the grey hare
Beneath the wild olive,
Only the linnet afit in the myrtle,
Only the spotted snake
Writhing swiftly
O'er the thyme and the spikenard,
Only the falcon
Dusking a moment the gold of the yellow broom,
Only the things of the air and the desert,
Know where deep in the maze of the undergrowth
Lieth the shrine of the sacred Goddess,
The shrine of Venus.
Up through the dark blue mist of the harebells —
All the wild glory, with trailing convolvulus,
Lenten lilies asway in the sunlight,
Wine-dark anemones, pasque-flowers of ruby,
Iris and daffodil and sweet smelling violet,
And high over all the white and gold shining
Where the wind raced o'er the asphodel meadows:
All the flower-glory of Spring in Maremma,
But here, just here, a mist of the harebells —
Up through the dark blue mist of the harebells

Rose like a white smoke hovering gently
Over the windless woodlands of Ostia
Where the charcoal-burners wander like shadows,
Rose a white vapour, stealthily, slowly.

Ah, but the wonder! the wan ghost of Venus
Rose slowly before me:

Dark, deep, and awful the eyes of the vision,
Sad beyond words that wraith of dead beauty,
Chill now and solemn,

Austere as the grave,
The face that had blanched

The high gods of old,

The face that had led

The heroes of men

From the heights of Caucasus

To the uttermost ends

Of Earth, as leadeth nightly

The Moon, her cohorts

Of perishing billows.

"I am she whom thou lovest":

"Nay, whom I worship, Goddess and Queen!"

"I am she whom thou worshippest":

"For thou art Beauty, and Beauty I worship,

"And thou art Love, and Love —

"Love is Beauty. They love not nor worship,

"They who dis sever the one from the other".

"Hearken, O Goddess!"

"Nay, shadow of shadows, why callest me Goddess!

Far from thy world "the Goddess" is banished.
Ye have chosen the dark: the dark be with you!
Ye have chosen sorrow: and sorrow is yours:
O fools that worship vain Gods, and know not
That life is the breath but of perishing dust —
They only live in whose hearts there hath fallen
The breath of my passion —
"O Goddess, *fade not!*"
"I pass, and behold,
With my passing goeth
The joy of the world!"

Darkly austere
The face of the Goddess.
Then like a flame
That groweth wan
And flickereth forth from the reach of vision,
The face of Venus
Was seen no more,
Though through the mist
Her eyes gleamed darkly,
Great fires of joy —
Of joy disherited,
But glorious ever
In their lordly scorn,
Their high disdain.

Not till the purple-hued
Wings of the twilight

Waved softly downward
From the Alban hills,
And moved stilly
Over the vast dim leagues of Maremma,
Turned I backward
My wandering steps.
Far o'er the white-glimmering
Breast of the Tyrrhene Sea
(Laid as in sleep at the feet of the hills)
Rose, dropping liquid fires
Into the wine-dark vault of the heaven,
The Star of Evening,
Venus, the Evening Star:
Eternal, serene,
In deathless beauty
Revolving ever
Through the stellar spheres!

High o'er the shadowy heights
Of the Volscian summits
The full moon soared:
Soared slowly upward
Like a golden nenuphar
In a vaster Nilus
Than that which floweth
Through the heart of Egypt.
The moon that maketh
The world so beautiful,
That moveth so tenderly

Over desolate things,
The moon that giveth
The amber light,
Wherein best blossom
The mystic flowers
Of human love.

Through the darkness
Whelming the waste,
And, like a stealthy tide
Rising around
Ardea, the cliff-girt,
Wavered the sound of joyous laughter.
Sweet words and sweeter
Fell where the lentisc
Bloomed, and the rosemary:
Loving caresses
Lost in a rustle
Where the hawthorn-bushes
Loomed large in the twilight
Of the fireflies' lanterns.

Deep in the heart of
A myrtle-thicket
A nightingale stirred:
With low sweet note,
Thrilling strangely,
And as though moving
With the breath of its passion

The midmost leaves.
But once her plaint: —
Then wild and glad,
In a free ecstasy,
In utter bliss,
In one high whirl of rapture, sang
His answering song
Her mate, low swaying upon a bough,
With throat full-strained, and quivering wings
Beating with tremulous whirr.

Then I was glad,
For surely I knew
I had dreamed a dream neath the spell of Maremma.
Not sunk in the drift
Of antique dust,
Lost from the ken of Earth
Within her shrine,
Venus, the Beautiful,
The Queen of Love!
But though no longer
Beheld of man,
Still living and breathing
Through the heart of the world —
Whether in the song,
Passionate, beautiful,
Of the nightingale;
Or in the glad rapture
Of lovers meeting,

With soft caresses
Hid in the dusk;
In the fair flower of the vast field of heaven;
Or in the glow,
The pulsing splendour,
Of the white star of joy,
The Star of Eve.

RED POPPIES.

(In the Sabine valleys near Rome)

THROUGH the seeding grass,
And the tall corn,
The wind goes:
With nimble feet,
And blithe voice,
Calling, calling,
The wind goes
Through the seeding grass,
And the tall corn.

What calleth the wind,
Passing by —
The shepherd-wind?
Far and near
He laugheth low,
And the red poppies
Lift their heads
And toss i' the sun.
A thousand thousand blooms

Tost i' the air,
Banners of joy,
For 'tis the shepherd-wind
Passing by,
Singing and laughing low
Through the seeding grass
And the tall corn.

THE WHITE PEACOCK.

Here where the sunlight
Floodeth the garden,
Where the pomegranate
Reareth its glory
Of gorgeous blossom;
Where the oleanders
Dream through the noontides;
And, like surf o' the sea
Round cliffs of basalt,
The thick magnolias
In billowy masses
Front the sombre green of the ilexes:
Here where the heat lies
Pale blue in the hollows,
Where blue are the shadows
On the fronds of the cactus,
Where pale blue the gleaming
Of fir and cypress,
With the cones upon them
Amber or glowing

With virgin gold:
Here where the honey-flower
Makes the heat fragrant,
As though from the gardens
Of Gulistân,
Where the bulbul singeth
Through a mist of roses,
A breath were borne:
Here where the dream-flowers,
The cream-white poppies
Silently waver,
And where the Scirocco,
Faint in the hollows,
Foldeth his soft white wings in the sunlight,
And lieth sleeping
Deep in the heart of
A sea of white violets:
Here, as the breath, as the soul of this beauty
Moveth in silence, and dreamlike, and slowly,
White as a snow-drift in mountain-valleys
When softly upon it the gold light lingers:
White as the foam o'the sea that is driven
O'er billows of azure agleam with sun-yellow:
Cream-white and soft as the breasts of a girl,
Moves the White Peacock, as though through the noontide
A dream of the moonlight were real for a moment.
Dim on the beautiful fan that he spreadeth,
Foldeth and spreadeth abroad in the sunlight,
Dim on the cream-white are blue adumbrations,

Shadows so pale in their delicate blueness
That visions they seem as of vanishing violets,
The fragrant white violets veined with azure,
Pale, pale as the breath of blue smoke in far woodlands.
Here, as the breath, as the soul of this beauty,
White as a cloud through the heats of the noontide
Moves the White Peacock.

THE SWIMMER OF NEMI.

(The Lake of Nemi: September)

WHITE through the azure,
The purple blueness,
Of Nemi's waters
The swimmer goeth.
Ivory-white, or wan white as roses
Yellowed and tanned by the suns of the Orient,
His strong limbs sever the violet hollows;
A shimmer of white fantastic motions
Wavering deep through the lake as he swimmeth.
Like gorse in the sunlight the gold of his yellow hair,
Yellow with sunshine and bright as with dew-drops,
Spray of the waters flung back as he tosseth
His head i' the sunlight in the midst of his laughter:
Red o'er his body, blossom-white mid the blueness,
And trailing behind him in glory of scarlet,
A branch of the red-berried ash of the mountains.
White as a moon-beam
Drifting athwart
The purple twilight,
The swimmer goeth —

Joyously laughing,
With o'er his shoulders,
Agleam in the sunshine
The trailing branch
With the scarlet berries.
Green are the leaves, and scarlet the berries,
White are the limbs of the swimmer beyond them,
Blue the deep heart of the still, brooding lakelet,
Pale-blue the hills in the haze of September,
The high Alban hills in their silence and beauty,
Purple the depths of the windless heaven
Curv'd like a flower o'er the waters of Nemi.

AL FAR DELLA NOTTE.

H^{ARK!} As a bubbling fount
That suddenly wells
And rises in tall spiral waves and flying spray,
The high, sweet, quavering, throbbing voice
Of the nightingale!
Not yet the purple veil of dusk has fallen,
But o'er the yellow band
That binds the west
The vesper star beats like the pulse of heaven.

Up from the fields
The peasants troop,
Singing their songs of love:
And oft the twang of thin string'd music breaks
High o'er the welcoming shouts,
The homing laughter.
The whirling bats are out,
And to and fro
The blue swifts wheel
Where, i' the shallows of the dusk,
The grey moths flutter

Over the pale blooms
Of the night-flowering bay.
Softly adown the slopes,
And o'er the plain,
Ave Maria
Solemnly soundeth.
The long day is over.
Dusk, and silence now:
And Night, that is as dew
On the Flower of the World.

THISTLEDOWN.

(Spring on the Campagna)

BLOWETH like snow
From the grey thistles
The thistledown:
And the fairy-feathers
O' the dandelion
Are tossed by the breeze
Hither and thither:
Over the grasses,
The seeding grasses
Where the poppies shake
And the campions waver,
And where the clover,
Purple and white,
Fills leagues with the fragrance
Of sunsweet honey;
Hither and thither
The fairy-feathers
O' the dandelion,
And white puff-balls
O' the thistledown,

Merrily dancing,
Light on the breeze,
Wheeling and sailing,
And laughing to scorn
The butterflies
And the moths of azure;
Blowing like snow
Or foam o' the sea,
Hither and thither
Upward and downward.

Now for a moment
A thistledown
On a white ball resteth,
Sunbleached and hollow;
A human skull
Of the ancient days,
When Sabines and Latins
Made all the land here
As red with blood
As it now is scarlet
With flaming poppies.
Now the feathers,
O' the dandelion,
Like sunlit swansdown
Long tost by the wind
O'er the laughter of waters,
Are blown like surf
On a hidden rock —

A broken arch
Of a Roman temple,
Where long, long ago,
The swarthy priests
Worshipped their Gods,
The Gods now less than
The very dust
Whence the green grass springeth.
But for a moment, then the wind takes them,
Blows them, plays with them,
Tosses them high through the gold of the sunshine,
Wavers them upward, wavers them downward.
Hither and thither among the white butterflies,
Over and under the blue-moths and honey-bees,
Over the leagues of blossoming clover,
Purple and white, the sweet-smelling clover,
Far o'er the grasses,
And grey hanging thistles,
Hither and thither
Are floating and sailing
The fairy-feathers
O' the dandelion,
Bloweth like snow
The joy o' the meadows,
The thistledown.

THE TWO RUINS.

A SEA of moonlight.
And in the sea an isle
Black, rugged, tempest-torn, vast:
O mighty Colosseum
More grand in this thy ruin
Than when proud Caesar smiled, and all thy walls
Rang with tumultuous acclaim,
While round thy dark foundations moaned
A wind of alien pain.
Terrible thou, O splendour of the Past.
How great the Rome that knew thee, and how dread.
Proud Roman, thine inheritance
Is as a deathless crown,
Yea, as a crown deep-set upon the brows,
The unfurrowed front of Time that is to be.

Hark, that low whine!
What crippled thing is this,
This spume of vice,
This wreck of high estate?
What ruin this that rises gaunt and wild:

Thou, thou art Rome, the Past,
The Rome that is!
Not here a venerable age,
But dull decay,
Slow death, and utter weariness.
Yon vast forlorn walls are but the frozen surf
Of tides long ages ebbd: .
In thee Ruin is, in thee and such as thee.

THE SHEPHERD.

(Near the Theatre of Marcellus: Piazza Montanara)

SOLITARY he stands,
Clad in his goat-skins,
Though all about him
The busy throng
Cometh and goeth.
Overhead, the vast ruin,
Wind-worn, time-wrought,
Gloomily rises.
Scarce doth he note it,
Yet doth it give him
The touch of nearness,
Which the soul craves for
In alien places:
As the strayed mariner,
Yearning, far inland,
For sight of the sea,
Smiles when he fingers a rope, or
Heareth the wind
Surge round the hedgerows
As erst through the cordage;

Or, on the endless, dusty, white high-road,
Puts his ear to the pole
Vibrating with song, as the mast
Erewhile rang with the hum
Of the hurricane.

What doth he here,
Away from the pastures
On the desolate Campagna?
From his haggard face
Sorrowfully his wild black eyes
Stare on the weariness,
The noise, and hurry,
And surge of the traffic.
Sometimes, a faint smile
Flitteth athwart his face,
When a woman, from the well,
Passeth by with a conca
Poised on her head:
Thus oft hath he seen
The peasant girls
In the little hamlets
Far out on the plain:
Or when a wine-cart
With its tall cappoto
A-swing like a high tent windswayed sidewise,
Rattles in from the Appian highway,
White with the dust of the Alban hills.
What doth he here,

He in whose eyes are
The passion of the desert:
He in whose ears rings
The free music
Of the winds that wander
Through the desert-ruins?
Not here, O Shepherd,
Would'st thou fain dwell,
Though in the Holy City
God's Regent lives:
Better the desolate waste,
Better the free lone life,
For there thou can'st breathe,
There silence abideth,
There, not the Regent,
But God himself
Dwelleth and speaketh.

ALL'ORA DELLA STELLA.

(Bells of Evening)

RING the bells of evening, through the gathering dusk;
Ring the bells upon the plain;
Rings the bell from out the tower against the light,
Black against the west aflame, against
The sea of deepening orange, purple, yellow
(O the pale green cowslip-yellow where the crows
Fly swiftly from the dim Campagna homeward);
Ring the bells from out the little chapel yonder,
In the tiny hill-town nestling on its craggy steep.

From this lonely height where, half forgotten,
Life still lingers in unvarying round,
Can they ring away the evil sloth that broodeth
As a bat-gigantic broodeth over
The low-breathing bust wherefrom it draws the life-blood?
Can they ring away the dark and stagnant vapours
That abide with men, here, on this height —
On this height now flaming in the sunset
Like a vast carbuncle on a burning desert?
Ring, O ring, O bells, ring, ring,

Not for peace, or rest that sweet is,
Not for happy glooms and tender,
But for storm and tempest rather,
For a fierce and surging tempest
That shall wake the mountain-hollows
With the cry of Life arising!

Rings the solitary bell upon the tower,
Where the fever-stricken monks
Kneel and pray:
Where the monks within the black and lonely tower
Dream that heaven lies yonder,
Where through seas of wondrous living yellow
The star of eve swims forth in silvern fire:
Ah, the heaven that dwelleth yonder!
Ring, O solitary bell, thy vesper,
Toll thy hymn of hopes that are as vapours,
Vapours lit a moment with strange glory
Ere they fade into the darkness following after!

Ring the bells upon the plain,
All along the misty, vague Campagna:
Unseen hamlets in the hollows, lonely dwellings
Where gaunt hermits kneel and mutter,
Scattered villages, and ruined places
Where the shepherd only sleeps and hears nought ever
Save the wild wind sweeping o'er the grasses,
Or the soft scirocco gliding stilly
O'er the fallen columns, broken arches,

Whereamong his sheep go wandering vaguely,
Hears but these, or cry of hawk or raven,
Nightjar swooping through the moonless dusk --
Hears nought else, save in the lonely distance
'The fierce sheepdogs snarling as they watch and prowl.
Softly, slow, the vesper bells are ringing
For all desolate haunts upon the waste,
For all dreary lives upon the lone Campagna,
Lives now spent like spume from ebbing waters,
Spume thrown waste to swelter in the sun,
Spume cast up and left by ebbing waters.

Ring the bells of evening through the gathering dusk:
Ring the bells upon the plain,
From the tower looming black against the light,
From the hill-town all aflame upon its steep,
Ring the bells:
Clamorous voices they, loud prayers crying
That of the perishing flames of sunset burning,
Of these red and yellow flames swift-fading yonder,
God will make new fires of sunrise splendid,
God will recreate a glorious morning.

THE MANDOLIN.

Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink!

Hark, the mandolin!

Through the dusk the merry music falleth sweet.

Where the fountain falls,

Where the fountain falls all shimmering in the moonshine white,

Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink!

Where the wind-stirred olives quiver,

Quiver, quiver, leaves a-quiver,

White as silver in the moonlight but like bat-wings in the dusk,

Where the great grey moths sail slowly

Slowly, slowly, like faint dreams

In the wildering woods of Sleep,

Where no night or day is,

But only, in dim twilights, the wan sheen

Of the Moon of Sleep.

Hark, the mandolin!

Where the dark-coned cypress rises,

Thin, more thin, till threadlike, wavering

The last spray soars up as smoke,

As a vanishing breath of incense,

To the silent stars that glimmer
In the veil of purple darkness,
The deep vault of heaven that seemeth
As a veil that falleth,
A dark veil that foldeth gently
The tired day-worn world, breathing stilly as a sleeping child.
Hark, the mandolin:
And a soft low sound of laughter!
Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink!

Hush: from out the cypress standing
Black against the yellow moonlight
What a thrill, what a sob, what a sudden rapture flung
Athwart the dark!
Passion of song!
Silence again, save mid the whispering leaves
The unquiet wind, that as the tide
Cometh and goeth.
Now one long thrilling note, prolonged and sweet,
And then a low swift stir,
A whirr of fluttering wings,
And, in the laurels near, two nested nightingales!
Loud, loud, the mandolin,
Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink,
Trink, trink, trinkle-trink!
Through the fragrant silent night it draweth near,
Ah, the low cry, the little laugh, the rustle:
Tinkle-trink — hush, a kiss — tinkle-trink — hush — hush —
Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink!

Where the shadows massed together
Make a hollow darkness, girt
By the yellow flood of moonshine floating by,
Where the groves of ilex whisper
In the silence, fragrant, sweet,
Where the ilexes are dreaming
In their depths of darkest shadow,
Move the fireflies slowly,
Mazily inweaving,
Interweaving, interflowing;
Wandering fires, like little lanterns
Borne by souls of birds and flowers
Seeking ever resurrection
In the gladsome world of sunshine;
Seekly vainly through the darkness
In beneath the ilex-branches
Where the very moonshine faileth,
And the dark gray moths wave wanly
Flitting from the outer gloaming.
Oh, the fragrance, and the mystery, and the silence!
Where the fireflies, mid the ilex,
Rise and fall, recross, inweave
In an endless wavy motion,
In a slow aerial dancing
In a maze of little flames
In and out the ilex-branches:
Hush! the mandolin!
Louder still, and louder, louder:
Ah, the happy laugh, and rustle,

Rustle, rustle,
Ah the kiss, the cry, the rapture.
Silence, where the ilex-branches
Loom out faintly from their darkness
Where, slow-wandering flames, the fireflies
Rise and fall, recross, inweave
In an endless wavy motion,
In a slow aerial dancing.

Silence: not a breath is stirring:
Not a leaflet quivers faintly.
Silence: even the bats are silent
Wheeling swiftly through the upper air,
Where the gnat's thin shrilling music
Fades into the flooding moonlight:
Hush, low whispered words and kisses,
Hush, a cry of pain, of rapture.
Not a sound, a sound thereafter,
But a low sweet sigh of breathing,
And, from out the flowering laurel,
Just a twittering breath of music,
Just a long-drawn pulsing note
Of a sweet and passionate answer.
Silence: hark, a stir — low laughter —
Whispered words — and rustle — rustle —
Trink — trink — the mandolin!
Hark, it trinkles down the valley,
Trink-trink, trinkle-trink, trinkle-trink!
Past the cistus, blooming whitely,

Past the oleander-bushes,
Past the ilexes and olives,
Where the two tall pines are whispering
With the sleepy wind that foldeth
His tired pinions ere he sleepeth
On the flood of amber moonlight.
Wind o' the night, tired wind o' night —
Tinkle-trink, trink, trinkle-trink,
Trink, trinkle-trink,
Trink!

BAT-WINGS.

FLITTER, flitter, through the twilight,
Pipistrello:

Where the moonshine glitters
Waver thy swart wings,
Darting hither, thither,
Swift as wheeling swallow.
Where the shadows gather
In and out thou flittest,
Flitter, flitter,
Waver, waver,
Pipistrello.

Thin thy faint aerial song is,
Thin and fainter than the shrilling
Of the gnats thou chasest wildly,
But how delicately dainty —
Thin and faint and wavering also,
In the high sweet upper air,
Where the gnats weave endless mazes
In their pyramidal dances —
And thy dusky wings go flutter,
Flutter, flutter,

Waver, waver,
But without a sound or rustle
Through the purple air of twilight.
Flitter, flitter, flutter, flitter,
Pipistrello.

LA VELIA.

(The Sea-Gull: Pontine Marshes)

HERE where the marsh
Waves white with ranunculus,
Where the yellow daffodil
Flieth his banner
In the fetid air,
And oft mid the bulrushes
Rustleth the porcupine
Or surgeth the boar —
Though bloweth rarely
The fresh wind,
The Tramontana,
And only Scirocco
Heavily lifts
The feathery plumes the tall canes carry:
What dost thou here,
O bird of the ocean?
Here, where the marshes
Are never stirred
By the pulse of the tides;

Here where the white mists
Crawl on the swamp,
But never the rush and the surge of the billows?
White as a snowflake thou gleamest, and passest:
Drearier now the chill waste of the Stagno,
Wearier now the dull silence and boding.
Would that again
Thy glad presence were gleaming
Here where the marsh
Stems white in the sunshine;
For swift on my sight,
As thy white wings wavered,
Broke the sea in its beauty,
With foam, and splendour
Of rolling waves:
And loud on my ears (O the longing, the yearning)
When thy cry filled the silence,
Came the surge of the sea
And the tumult of waters.

SPUMA DAL MARE.

(On the Latin Coast)

FLOWER o' the wave,
White foam of the waters,
The many-coloured:
Here blue as a hare-bell,
Here pale as the turquoise;
Here green as the grasses
Of mountain hollows,
Here lucent as jade when wet in the sunshine,
Here paler than apples ere ruddied by autumn.
Depths o' the purple!
Amethyst yonder,
Yonder as ling on the hills of October,
With shadows as deep,
Where islets of sea-wrack
Wave in the shallows,
As the sheen of the feathers
On the blue-green breast
Of the bird of the Orient,
The splendid peacock.
Foam o' the waves,

White crests ashine
With a dazzle of sunlight!
Here the low breakers are rolling through shallows,
Yellow and muddied, the hue of the topaz
Ere cut from the boulder;
Save when the sunlight swims through them slantwise,
When inward they roll
Long billows of amber,
Crowned with pale yellow
And gray-green spume.
Here wan gray their slopes
Where the broken lights reach them,
Dull gray of pearl, and dappled, and darkling,
As when mid the high
Northward drift of the clouds,
Scirocco bloweth
With soft fanning breath.

Foam o' the waves,
Blown blossoms of ocean,
White flowers of the waters,
The many-coloured.

A WINTER EVENING.

(An Hour after Nightfall, on Saturday January 17, 1891)

[To E. W. R.]

THE wild wind in the pines
Surgeth and moaneth,
And the flying snow
Whirls hither and thither,
Tost from the sprays of the firs on the Pincio.
Here, in the dim gloomy Via dell' Mura,
Dark as a torrent in mountainous chasms,
Not a breath of the tempest waves downward upon us:
Straight down the vast mighty walls hang in silence
Ice-spears and ice-shafts, rigid, unyielding:
Here all the snow-drift lies thick and untrodden,
Cold, white, and desolate save where the red light
Gleams from a window in yonder high turret.
Loud mid the trees of the Medici gardens,
Surgeth the wind, and over the Pincio
Sweeps to the southward the drift of the snowstorm:
Clear to the northward the wan wintry moonshine
Showeth the last pines silent and moveless,

Untouch'd by the wild sweeping wing of the tempest.
Swift in the skies o'er the heights of the Vatican
Flash upon flash, long pulsations of lightning,
And borne afar from the distant Campagna
The long low muttering growls of the thunder.
Wild night of the tempest, with lightning and moonshine,
Thunder afar and the surge of the snow-blast,
The whisper of pines and the glimmer of starlight,
The voice of the wind in the woods of Borghese,
These, these together, and here in the darkness
Here in the dim, gloomy Via dell' Mura,
Nought but the peace of the snow-drift unruffled,
Whitely obscure, save where from the window
High in the walls of the Medici Gardens
Glow a red shining, fiercely bloodred.
What lies in the heart of thee, Night, thus so ominous?
What is thy secret, strange joy or strange sorrow?

THE BATHER.

WHERE the sea-wind ruffles
The pale pink blooms
Of the fragrant Daphne,
And passeth softly
Over the sward
Of the cyclamen-blossoms,
The Bather stands.
Rosy white, as a cloud at the dawning,
Silent she stands,
And looks far seaward,
As a seabird, dreaming
On some lone rock,
Poiseth his pinions
Ere over the waters
He moves like a vision
On motionless wings.

Beautiful, beautiful,
The sunlit gleam
Of her naked body,
Ivorywhite mid the cyclamen-blossoms,

A wave o' the sea mid the blooms of the Daphne.
Blue as the innermost heart of the ocean
The arch of the sky where the wood runneth seaward,
Blue as the depths of the innermost heaven
The vast heaving breast of the slow-moving waters:
Green the thick grasses that run from the woodland,
Green as the heart of the foam-crested billows
Curving a moment ere washing far inland
Up the long reach of the sands gleaming golden.
The land-breath beareth
Afar the fragrance
Of thyme and basil
And clustered rosemary;
And o'er the fennel,
And through the broom,
It floateth softly,
As the wind of noon
That cometh and goeth
Though none hearkens
Its downy wings.
And keen, the seawind
Bears up the odours
Of blossoming pinks
And salt rock-grasses,
Of rustling seaweed
And mosses of pools
Where the rosy blooms
Of the sea-flowers open
Mid stranded waves.

As a water-lily
Touched by the breath
Of sunrise-glory,
Moveth and swayeth
With tremulous joy,
So o'er the sunlit
White gleaming body
Of the beautiful bather
Passeth a quiver.
Rosy-white, as a cloud at the dawning,
Poised like a swallow that meeteth the wind,
For a moment she standeth
Where the sea-wind softly
Moveth over
The thick pink sward of the cyclamen-blossoms.
Moveth and rustleth
With faint sussurru
The pale pink blooms
Of the fragrant Daphne.

AT VEII.
(*" Crown of Etruria "*)

Loud bloweth the tramontana
O'er the uplands of Veii:
Shrill through the grasses
It whistles blithely,
Tossing the thistle-foam
Far o'er the pastures
Where the goat-skinn'd shepherd
Tendeth his sheep,
And the high hawk, swooping,
Drifteth his shadow
From slope to slope.

Here, when Rome lay
Crouch'd in her hollows
Where the Tiber lapped
The Hill of Saturn,
Veii the beautiful gleamed in the sunlight.
Here, in the springs
That bloomed as sweetly

Two thousand years since,
As now when the blackbird
Calleth loudly
Where the Cremcra surgeth
Through her hollow glen,
And rainbows are woven
Where the torrents vanish
Over mossed ledges,
White sheets of water
With emerald hearts:
Here, the Etrurian
Banner waved proudly,
Lordly and glorious,
Sovereign ever
From sea to sea.
Here the proud hosts
Laughed when the battle-cry
Rang through the highways,
And when from the towers
Of Veii the mighty
The herald-clarions
Sent a wild blast
On the wind of the morning,
A tumult of summons
To the flashing swords,
And the merciless rain
Of spears gleaming white
As hail on the hill-sides.
Here the fair city was decked as a maiden

Led forth as a bride,
With sunlit towers
And banners yellow
With virgin gold,
And shrines of the holy ones
Aflame in the sun,
As the waters of ocean
When the blossom of morning
Swiftly unfolds in a myriad wavelets
Leaping and laughing in shining splendour.

Here now the dust bloweth
Where the Gods stood proudly,
Staring undaunted
Through the shadows of Tiber:
Here now the grasses
Wave, where the banners
Of ancient Etruria
Tossed i' the sun:
And where the clarions
Of the heralds rang,
The jay screameth
From her swaying bough.
Slowly the shepherd,
Like the moving shadow
Cast by the flock that followeth after,
Wandereth, heedless,
O'er the vast spaces:
Nor dreameth ever

Of what lies buried
Beneath the waste,
Though oft he wonders
When his foot striketh
A rusty spear-head;
Or when, from the mould,
A stone hand cometh,
As though the dead
Were stirring again
Where now the windblown foam of the thistles
Whitens the pastures of what was Veii.

THE WILD MARE.

LIKE a breath that comes and goes
O'er the waveless waste
Of sleeping Ocean,
So sweeps across the plain
The herd of wild horses.
Like banners in the wind
Their flying tails,
Their streaming manes:
And like spume of the sea
Fang'd by breakers,
The white froth tossed from their blood-red nostrils.
Out from the midst of them
Dasheth a white mare,
White as a swan in the pride of her beauty:
And, like the whirlwind,
Following after,
A snorting stallion,
Swart as an Indian
Diver of corall
Wild the gyrations,
The rush and the whirl;
Loud the hot panting

Of the snow-white mare,
As swift upon her
The stallion gaineth:
Fierce the proud snorting
Of him, victorious:
And loud, swelling loud on the wind from the mountains,
The hoarse savage tumult of neighing and stamping
Where, wheeling, the herd of wild horses awaiteth —
Ears thrown back, tails thrashing their flanks or swept under —
The challenging scream of the conqueror-stallion.

AUGUST AFTERNOON IN ROME.

(From the Trastevere)

[To THÉODORE ROUSSEL]

DULL yellow shot with molten gold
The Tiber flows.

Beneath the walls the flood moves azurely,
With purplish shadows where the bridge
Spans triple-arch'd the stream:
Brown on the hither bank an idle barge,
With tawny sails still damp with spray
Blown from Ligurian seas:
And far, in the middle-flood, adrift, unoar'd,
A narrow boat, swift-moving, black,
Follows the flowing wave like a living thing.

Full-flooded by the sun the houses lie
Across the stream.
Pale pink their walls, or touched to paler blue,
But wanly yellow most, or soft as cream
Brown-curdled in the heat.
Oft, too, the tall façades asleep in the glow,
Are dusk'd by violet shadows, delicate

As the pale sheen of hyacinth-meadows where
The hills are glad with April wandering by.
Enmassed they stand, aglow, asleep:
The green blinds closed, like folded leaves,
Like ivy-leaves close-cluster'd to the pale white bark
Of the tall Austral trees below'd of those
Who dwell where the Three Fountains rise from deathly soil.
Hot in the yellow glare of the sun they stand,
The myriad houses, with their infinite hues.

The green blinds here loom dark:
Here emerald-bright as the young grass that springs
Beneath the blackthorn-blossoms snowing down.
Brown-black the flat bare roofs,
Save where, like floating flower-clouds, gardens glow
High-perch'd mid perilous ravines of wall,
With scarlet, orange, white, and fleeting gold.
In the deserted streets no passer-by
Throws a distorted phantom o'er the way,
Though in the deep-blue shadow-side there drifts
A trickling stream of life.
Dim drowsy silence holds the day, for all
The water-seller sounding hollowly
His *Fresca, acqua fresca, fred' e fresc'!*
Or melon-merchant shrilling loud and thin
His long fantastic cry.

Here, silence too:
Only the long slow wash

Of the dull wave of Tiber's murmurous flood.
At times a far-off bell
Clangs,
And stillness comes again, as mists draw in.
Only the muffled voice
Of the wan, yellow, listless-moving stream —
And, hark, from yonder osteria, dim in shade,
The sudden, harsh, and dissonant jarring chords
Of a loose-strung guitar,
Twang'd idly for a few brief moments, e'er
The half-sung song grows drowsier, and still.

THE OLIVES OF TIVOLI.

GREY as the swirl
Of spindrift flying
O'er windblown ice,
Gleam the myriad leaves of the olives,
When, surging from under,
The wind leapeth
And laughs amongst them.
Like the sea when the tides
Are lifting and rippling
The restless wavelets
Wandering shoreward,
When over them breaketh
In a glittering shining
The flood of moonlight,
So are the wind-twisted olives of Tivoli.
Green as the grasses
When Scirocco bloweth
Palely upon them,
The lower leaves:
But soft and white
As the down of an owl,

Or wan grey feathery plumes of the snow-flakes,
The myriad upper
Shimmering wings
That wave like surf o'er the sea of the olives,
When, surging from under,
Where the plain darkles
In purpling mist,
The wind laughs
As he leapeth among them.

SCIROCCO.

(June)

SOFTLY as feathers
That fall through the twilight
When wild swans are winging
Back to the northward:
Softly as waters,
Unruffled, and tideless,
Laving the mosses
Of inland seas:
Soft through the forest,
And down through the valley,
Light as a breath o'er the pools of the marish,
Still as a moonbeam over the pastures,
Goeth Scirocco.

Warm his breath:
The night-flowers know it,
Love it, and open
Their blooms for its sweetness:
Warm the tender low wind of his pinions

Scarce brushing together the spires of the grasses:
Ah, how they whisper, the little green leaflets
Black in the dusk or grey in the moonlight:
Ah, how they whisper and shiver, the tremulous
Leaves of the poplar, and shimmer and rustle
When soft as a vapour that steals from the marshes
The wings of Scirocco fan silently through them.

Oftimes he lingers
By ruined nests
Deep in the hedgerows,
And bloweth a feather
In little eddies,
A yellow feather
That once had fluttered
On a breast alive with
A rapture of song:
But slowly ceaseth,
And passeth sadly.
Oftimes he riseth
Up through the branches
Where the fireflies wander,
Up through the branches
Of oak and chestnut,
And stirs so gently
With sway of his wings
That the leaves, dreaming,
Think that a moonbeam
Only, or moonshine,

Moves through the heart of them.
Upward he soareth
Oft, silently floating
Through the purple aether,
Still as the fern-owl over the covert,
Or as allocco haunting the woodland,
Up to the soft curded foam of the cloudlets,
The white dappled cloudlets the south-wind bringeth.
There, dreaming, he moveth
Or sails through the moonlight,
Till chill in the high upper air and the silence,
Slowly he sinketh
Earthward again,
Silently floateth
Down o'er the woodlands:
Foldeth his wings and slow through the branches
Drifts, scarcely breathing,
'Till tired, mid the flowers or the hedgerows he creepeth,
Whispers alow mid the spires of the grasses,
Or swooning at last to motionless slumber
Floats like a shadow adrift on the pastures.

THE WIND AT FIDENAE.

(*To D. H. In Remembrance*)

FRESH from the Sabines,
The Beautiful Hills,
The wind bloweth.
Down o'er the slopes,
Where the olives whiten
As though the feet
Of the wind were snow-clad:
Out o'er the plain
Where a paradise
Of wild blooms waveth,
And where, in the sunswept
Leagues of azure,
A thousand larks are
As a thousand founts
Mid the perfect joy of
The depths of heaven.
Swift o'er the heights,
And over the valleys
Where the grey oxen sleepily stand,
Down, like a wild hawk swooping earthward,

Over the winding reaches of Tiber,
Bloweth the wind!
How the wind bloweth,
Here on the steeps of
Ancient Fidenae,
Where no voice soundeth
Now, save the shepherd
Calling his sheep;
And where none wander
But only the cloud-shadows,
Vague ghosts of the past.
Sweet and fresh from the Sabines,
Now as of yore,
When Etruscan maidens
Laughed as their lovers
Mocked the damsels
Of alien Rome,
Sweet with the same young breath o' the world
Bloweth the wind.

SORGENDO LA LUNA.

NO SOUND,
Save the hush'd breath,
The slowly flowing,
The long and low withdrawing breath of Rome.
Not a leaf quivers, where the dark,
With eyes of rayless shadow and moonlit hair,
Dreams in the black
And hollow cavernous depth of the ilex-trees.
No sound,
Save the hush'd breath of Rome,
And sweet and fresh and clear
The bubbling, swaying, ever quavering jet
Of water fill'd with pale nocturnal gleams,
That, in the broad low fount,
Falleth,
Falleth and riseth,
Riseth and falleth, swayeth and surgeth, ever
A spring of life and joy where ceaselessly
The shadow of two sovran powers make
A terror without fear, a night that hath no dark,
Time, with his sunlit wings,

Death, with his pinions vast and duskily dim:
Time, breathing vanishing life:
Death, breathing low
From twilights of Oblivion whence Time rose
A wild and wandering star forlornly whirled,
Seen for a moment, ere for ever lost.
Up from the marble fount
The water leaps,
Sways in the moonshine, springeth, springeth,
Falleth and riseth,
Like sweet faint lapping music,
Soft gurgling notes of woodland brooks that wander
Low laughing where the hollowed stones are green
With slippery moss that hath a trickling sound:
Leapeth and springeth,
Singing forever
A wayward song.
While the vast wings of Time and Death drift slowly,
While, faint and far, the tides of life
Sigh in a long scarce audible breath from Rome,
Or faintlier still withdraw down shores of dusk;
For ever singing
It leapeth and falleth:
Falleth and leapeth,
Falleth,
And falleth.

IN JULY.

(*South of Rome*) .

PALE-ROSE the dust lying thick upon the road:
Grey-green the thirsty grasses by the way.
The long flat silvery sheen of the vast champaign
Shimmers beneath the blazing tide of noon.
The blood-red poppies flame
Like furnace-breaths:
Like wan vague dreams the misty lavender
Drifts greyly through the quivering maze, or seems
Thus through the visionary glow to drift.
On the far slope, beyond the ruin'd arch,
A grey-white cloudlet rests,
The cluster'd sheep alow: close, moveless all,
And silent, save when faintly from their midst
A slumberous tinkle comes,
Cometh, and goeth.
Low-stretch'd in the blue shade,
Beneath the ruin,
The shepherd sleeps.
Nought stirs. •
The wind moves not, nor with the faintest breath

Toucheth the half-fallen blooms of the asphodels.
Here only, where the pale pink ash
Of the long road doth slowly flush to rose,
A bronze-wing'd beetle moveth low,
And sends one tiny puff of smoke-like dust
Faint through the golden glimmer of the heat.

THE NAKED RIDER.

THROUGH the dark gorge
With its cliffs of basalt,
The rider comes.
The sunlight floodeth
The breast of the hill,
And all the mouth
Of the sullen pass
Is light with the foam of
A thousand blooms
Of the white narcissi,
With a waving sea
Of asphodels.

On a white horse,
A cream-white stallion
With bloodied nostrils
And wild dark eyes,
The naked rider
Laughs as he cometh,
And hails the sunlight breaking upon him.

Full breaks the flood
Of the yellow light
On the naked youth,
Glowing, as ivory
In the amber of moonrise
In the violet eves
Of August-tides.

Dark as the heart of a hill-lake his tresses,
Scarlet the crown of the poppies inwoven
I'the thick wavy hair that crowneth his whiteness,
Strong the white arms,
The broad heaving breast,
The tent thighs guiding
The mighty stallion.

Out from the gloom
Of the mountain valley,
Where cliffs of basalt
Make noontide twilight,
And where the great-bat
Swingeth his heavy wings,
And echo reverberates
The screams of the falcons:
Where nought else soundeth
Save the surge or the moaning
Of mountain-winds,
Or the long crash and rattle
Of falling stones
Spurned by the hill fox

Seeking his hollow lair:
Out from the gorge
Into the sunlight,
To the glowing world,
To the flowers and the birds
And the west wind laden
With the breaths of rosemary, basil, and thyme —
Comes the white rider,
The naked youth
Glowing like ivory
In the yellow sunshine.
Beautiful, beautiful, this youth of the mountain,
Laughing low as he rideth
Forth to the sunlight,
The scarlet poppies agleam in his tresses
Dark as the thick-cluster'd grapes of the ivy;
While over the foam
Of the sea of narcissi,
And high through the surf
Of the asphodels,
Trampleth, and snorteth
From his bloodred nostrils,
The cream-white stallion.

THE FÄLLEN GODDESS

(On a Statue of Venus, found near Anzio (Antium) on the Latin Coast, and now in a Church as the Madonna of the Seven Sorrows).

NOT HERE, O Goddess,
In these chill glooms
With silence about thee —
Save when at matins or dusk o'the evensong
The priests mutter
Or chant the Mass,
And the few tired peasants
Pray with bent heads,
Lost in the stillness,
Lost in the gloom —
Not here, O Goddess,
Thy resting-place,
Who, ages ago,
When the world was young,
Stood where the myrtless and roses were blooming,
Stood where the dayshine was rising and flooding
Up from the purple-blue flower of the ocean,
Flooding and rising till all of the inland

Glowed in the splendour, and valley and mountain
Laughed with the joy of the world's young laughter.

Ah, when about thee,
The roses were twined,
When thy feet were covered
With roses and lilies,
And when, before thee,
Fresh pluckt by thy fountain,
Lay sweet-smelling violets —
Ah, when beside thee
The lovers prayed,
He wan as ivory
Found where the sources
Of Nilus wander
In swart Ethiopia,
She as the nenuphar
Waked by the moonlight
Flooding the river, as
Duskily moving
In coils gigantic
It flows through the desert,
Where the Sphinx broodeth
And where, at dawn,
The voice of Memnon
Solemnly calls —
Ah, when beside thee,
The lovers prayed,
And thy heart was stirred

With the wind of their love,
With passion and longing
And sweet desire —
Ah, in that moment,
Did some dark shadow
From Time unborn
Dusk thy glad vision?
Didst thou, upon them,
Kneeling before thee,
Frown, and heed not
The prayer they made:
In thy heart the ache
And a deathless sorrow
That made their passion
A bitter folly?
What unto thee, then,
O Venus, Goddess,
The roses and lilies
Entwined about thee,
The fragrant violets
Freshly gathered
With the spray o'thy fountain
Dew-sprent o'er them:
What then to thee
Thy myrtle-grove,
Thy doves and sparrows
Fluttering about thee,
Fluttering, flying
Through the azure air —

What, O Goddess,
Thy worshippers pale,
He with the passion
Aflame in his eyes,
She with the longing
Astir in her bosom,
Whose two white flowers
Are pressed against thee
Where the violets cover
And cloud thy feet?
Foresawest thou ever,
At morn or dusk,
With lovers praying
And garlanding thee
With the flowers thou lovest,
Or when in the silent
Depths o' the night
Thy vigils knew not
A stir, a whisper,
But all was darkness
And brooding peace,
Foresawest thou ever
Thy doom to be?
The veils of darkness
That yet would cover
The earth thou lovest,
The passing of all
The joyous gods,
And slowly, slowly

Across the world
The chilling shadow
Fall of the Cross?

Ah, better that after
Thy doom had fallen
And thenceforth lovers
Sought thee no more,
And only the wild doves
Hovered about thee,
Only the sparrows
Out of the wildwood
Fluttered about thine uncrown'd forehead,
Only the wild-rose clambered around thee,
Only the hyacinths out of the woodland
Stole through the grasses
And decked thee and girt thee —
Better that after
The fierce barbarians
Thrust thee prostrate
With laughter and mocking,
And left thee, there,
In the Groves of Venus,
A thing dishonoured,
A Fallen Goddess, —
Better that then
The weeds had gathered
And swift o'ergrown thee,
And leaves of autumn,

And dust o' the wind,
And earth and mosses,
Had swallowed thee up,
Had hidden thee ever,
There in thy sorrow,
There in thy dream,
With none to know of thee,
None to mourn,
Save only the wild-dove brooding alone,
Only the song-birds lost in the thicket,
Only the hyacinths, lilies, and roses,
Only the grasses that wave round thy fountain,
Only the violets, purple, sweet-smelling,
Deep in the heart of them, lost in their twilight.

Harsh fate for thee,
Goddess, not thus to have lain
In the mould and the darkness
Till at last, in the far-off,
The slow revolution
Of ages or aeons
Should bring thee, awaking,
The sound of rejoicing,
And all thy white kindred
Should gather about thee,
With songs and laughter,
And greet thee, and bless thee,
And woo thee with longing and rapture and kisses,
While joyous behind them,

From mountain and valley
And up from the shores of
The vast flower of Ocean,
White-robed lovers should hasten and follow,
Hands claspt in hands,
With baskets of roses
And lilies for thee,
And doves soft and snowwhite
As these, thy white breasts,
And prayers, and incense
Of violets fragrant,
Fresh-gathered violets smelling of thee:
Taen, then, would'st thou stir
In the dark mould about thee,
And sweet in the woodland
The wild-doves would murmur,
And swift in the thicket the song-birds would gather,
And all from about thee the darkness would lessen.
Up through the grasses, and where the wild hyacinths
Cluster enmassed in a hollow of blueness,
And where the wild-roses are raining their petals
Down through the fragrant green boughs of their tangle,
Up through the midst of them, white as a seabird
Rising from out of the joy of the billows,
Swift would arise, like a flower too, thine arm:
Then from the tangle of roses and grasses —
O but the joy of it! white gleaming shoulders,
Head with the halo of empire about it,
Eyes deep with the dream of the secrets of life,

And breasts soft and white as the milk held within them —
O body of beauty, O Venus, O Goddess
Thus, thus would thy birth be, thy glad resurrection!

Ah better that after
Thy doom had fallen
Thou had'st not waken'd,
O Goddess, more!
Better that never
The Roman warriors
Staring upon thee
Beheld thy beauty
And laughed to see it,
And took thee and haled thee
Far from thy grove,
And girt thee with rushes and flags from the sea-shore,
And laid thee a captive deep down in a war-boat,
And heedless of wrath or of vengeance from heaven
Carried thee far through the waters Ionian,
Up through the wide lonely waste of the Tyrrhene,
Till dim through the haze, like a cloud at the dawning,
The low shores of Latium
Blue rose before thee.

Was it for this,
O Venus, Goddess,
That thou hast passioned?
O bitter lust
Of a joyless faith,

That mocketh beauty
And laudeth the grave:
What thing is this,
What bitter mocking,
That thou hast taken
The sacred Goddess
And raised her darkling
Here in thy temple,
Midst tawdry idols
And childish things —
Hast placed upon her
Immaculate brows
This tinsel crown;
And hung about her
These pitiful robes
That a slave would have scorned
In the olden days
When men loved beauty
For beauty's sake:
Hast decked her bosom
(O Heart of Love!)
With a thing shaped heart-wise
And seven times pierced
With brazen arrows:
Hast stolen thy name, even, Goddess, Venus,
And called thee Mother
Of a God thou know'st not,
Called thee Madonna, the Mother of Sorrows,
Called thee the Virgin of Sorrows Seven —

Was it for this —
Ah, better a thousand times
They had wrought thy havoc,
There, in the heart of
Thy sacred grove:
Better — O bitterness
Of things that are,
Goddess, and Queen!

DE PROFUNDIS.

WHENCE hast thou gone,
O vision beloved?
There is silence now
In thy groves, and never
A voice proclaimeth
Thy glory come,
Thy joy rearisen!

O passion of beauty,
Forsake not thus
Those who have worshipped thee,
Body and soul!
Come to us, come to us,
Inviolatè, Beautiful,
Thou whose breath
Is as Spring o'er the world,
Whose smile is the flowering
Of the wide green Earth!
Deep in the heart of thee,
Like a moonbeam moving
Through the heart of a hill-lake,

Moveth Compassion:
O Belovĕd,
Be with us ever,
Thou, the Beautiful,
Passion of Beauty,
Alma Victrix!

ULTIMO SOSPIRO.

O dolce primavera pien' di oiezzo e amor!
Che fai tu..... che fai fra tanti fior?

Colgo le rose amabili dei più soavi odori;
Colgo le rose affabili e i lunghi gelsomini,
Nei olenti miei giardini io vi tengo al cor.

ROMAN FOLKSONG.

Joy of the world,
O flower-crown'd Spring,
With thine odorous breath and thy heart of love,
Breathe through this verse thy sweet message of longing.
Lo, in the gardens of Alma, whose lovers
Die gladly in worship, but fail not ever,
Oft have I strayed,
Oft have I lingered
When high through the noon the lost lark has been singing,
Or when in the moonlight
Soft through the silence has whispered the ocean,
Or when, in the dark
Of the ilex-woods,
Where the fireflies wavered
Frail wandering stars,
Not a sound has been heard

But Scirocco rustling
The midmost leaves
Of the trees where he sleepeth.

Roses of love,
White lilies of dream,
Frail blooms that have blossom'd
Into life with thy breathing:
Blow them, O wind,
West wind of the Spring,
Lift them and take them where gardens await them,
Lift them and take them to those who hearken,
Facing the dawn, for the sounds of the morning,
With wide eyes glad with the beautiful vision,
O whispers of joy,
O breaths of passion,
O sighs of longing.



